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**AN IRISH APOLOGIA.**



# AN IRISH APOLOGIA

SOME THOUGHTS ON ANGLO-IRISH  
RELATIONS AND THE WAR

BY

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# An Irish Apologia.

## I.

I WOULD invite your particular attention, at the outset of this little book, to the significance of its title. I have called it "An Irish Apologia." Now, an *apologia* certainly does not mean an apology; it does not quite mean even a defence; it means rather an explanation, an exposition. I should put myself out of court at the beginning of a book which aims at a bettering in Anglo-Irish relations did I propose to write an apology for Ireland. These thoughts are addressed primarily to the English reader, though I hope they may find audience also in Ireland; they constitute an attempt to explain what English people regard as the shortcomings of Ireland in connection with the war; and that explanation must proceed from the basis that Ireland—when I say Ireland here, I mean Nationalist Ireland—does not recognize or admit as shortcomings those qualities of thought and action which differentiate her from England, those qualities which have been responsible for her different outlook upon, and different attitude towards, the European War. I regret profoundly the fact that these differential qualities have so far manifested themselves as to prevent Ireland from playing her full part in the war, if only because that fact has frustrated what,

in the early days of the war, seemed to be the supreme opportunity for an Anglo-Irish reconciliation. The fact may be deplored; it must also be accepted; and my *rôle* here is not polemical, but philosophical.

It is the purpose of this small volume to consider these differential qualities of Ireland and to attempt an explanation of them from the Irish point of view for the benefit of the English point of view. The limited extent to which Ireland has participated, both in what may be called the spiritual and the material spheres, in the prosecution of the war; the Rebellion of Easter, 1916; the refusal of Ireland to submit to conscription—these facts, exploited by a ~~certain section of the London Press~~, have produced in a mass of the English people an antipathy and contempt for Ireland. It will be agreed at once, however, that, on whatever terms they live, England and Ireland must live together. Geographically, economically, and, in the wider sense of the word, politically, the two countries' destinies are inevitably linked. I am concerned here with racial relations, not with political relations, though the one must affect the other; and I submit to you that racial antipathy is for either party an unhealthy basis in an indissoluble partnership of races. What is written here essays, by way of promoting sympathetic understanding, to secure a more healthy basis.

The present strained relations between England and Ireland, as, indeed, the whole "Irish question"—the Anglo-Irish question is a more exact phrase—derive from the fact that the

two races do not understand each other. Few people have tried to make them understand each other; and most of those who have tried have failed. The average Irish Nationalist has failed—it may be admitted that he has not often tried very hard, being, unfortunately, a person somewhat careless of your opinion—because he and you have a widely different mode of thought, reason by widely different processes of mind, and speak a widely different mental language. The average Irish Unionist has failed—when he has tried, which is seldom—because, regarding himself, as he too often does, as a member of an “English Garrison,” his mental equipment consists in just those qualities, only in an aggravated form, which prohibit the average Englishman from understanding the average Irish Nationalist.

It was Sir Horace Plunkett who first broke away from the now discarded tradition that the Irish Unionist case should repose upon a basis of ignorance; and he gave us, in *Ireland in the Twentieth Century*, a study of Anglo-Irish relations from the point of view of one who has been aptly defined as “a Unionist of that rare type which, while recognizing the indisputable nationality of Ireland, has so little fear of its absorption or disappearance that the alleged material advantages of union with England appear more desirable than the chances of self-government, and the perhaps rather empty satisfaction of the public recognition of a national entity too self-evident to require any such adventitious assistance.”

The Irish Nationalist who, perhaps, came nearest to success was the late Tom Kettle, who died for Ireland and for England on the field of Ginchy; but even he did not quite succeed, because, for all his versatility and cosmopolitanism, he was essentially an Irishman, and therefore incapable of projecting himself, in his exposition of Ireland, into the English point of view.

I am very deeply sensible of the fact that, in these circumstances, it may well appear a gross presumption for me to essay what better men than I have essayed in vain. Let me seek to excuse this presumption on three grounds. In the first place, time presses; the two nations are rapidly drifting into a mood of mutual exasperation in which Irishmen will altogether refuse to explain themselves and Englishmen will altogether refuse to listen to explanations; so that if any man believes he can offer a word of mediation, he must speak now, or else for ever hold his peace. In the next place, the present study of Anglo-Irish relations is limited in its scope. It is undertaken for no party political purpose; it is written from no brief; it proposes no device of political mechanics for a solution of the "Irish question." It aims merely at a consideration of Anglo-Irish relations in so far, and in so far only, as they bear upon the war. I should mention here, more than for any other reason as a guarantee that, if I have any bias in this matter, it is a bias favourable to the English and unfavourable to the Irish point of view, that my political associations in Ireland have been Unionist. I must



necessarily state here, therefore, views which are not my own views ; but I have endeavoured sincerely, for the purposes of this inquiry, to divest myself of prejudices, and to write the thing as I see it for the good of things as they are. Such an inquiry must be of a two-fold character. It involves a definition of the Irish attitude towards the war ; it involves also, if our definition is to be made to good purpose, a consideration of the influences conditioning that attitude—in other words, a study in political psychology, in which undeveloped science I must depend on my own lines of observation and present my own conclusions for what they may be worth.

My third excuse is in the nature of a personal explanation. We have seen that he who should propose to make Ireland intelligible to England requires both an Irish and an English point of view. It is impossible to achieve that two-fold qualification in perfection ; but I venture to claim for myself at least some elements in it. On the one hand, I am of English birth ; I lived my early life in England ; and I was, by birth and breeding, a high Tory. Now it is, I think, the Tory qualities at their best which became the dominant characteristics of the English people in the war—the qualities of pure and exalted patriotism, of discipline, of courage physical and moral, of intense concentration, of sacrifice of self in the interests of the State, of a certain ruthlessness in subordinating all else to the supreme necessities of a high cause. Therefore, I believe that I understand, as perhaps no born Irishman can understand, in what mood the English people

encountered the trial of war; and the nobility of soul which you discovered in that trial makes me the more anxious (though it may be much to ask in the heat and emotion of war) that reason and understanding, not passion and prejudice, should determine the English judgment where the Irish people are concerned. For, on the other hand, I was born in Dublin; I have lived for many years past in Ireland; I have made my home and my friends in this country; I have struck my roots deep into the soil; I have in my temperament, I suppose, something of that queer receptive quality which, under the influence of the nameless but potent magic of Ireland, made so many of the English who came to Ireland after the Conquest "more Irish than the Irish themselves."

So, on the one hand, then, I can appreciate the English point of view; and, on the other hand, I hope I can appreciate better than most Englishmen the Irish point of view. I shall do the latter in the course of this book, I expect, some injustice; no Englishman could do otherwise; but at least I shall not sin against the light so far as I have it. Because I love the English people of whom I am sprung, and know them well; because I love the Irish people among whom I have made my home, and know them, if not well, at least better than the average Englishman; and because I feel deeply that the mutual antipathy of the two peoples must be calamitous for both—for these reasons I offer to all men of goodwill these reflections on Anglo-Irish relations and the War.

## II.

A GREAT Irishman who, though he once sat as an Irish Unionist member of Parliament, now has the rare distinction of being a non-party man—I mean Sir Horace Plunkett—once gave utterance to an epigram which has been widely quoted, more often misquoted, and almost entirely ignored in its practical application. “Anglo-Irish history is for Englishmen to remember, for Irishmen to forget.” The great majority of Irishmen, I sincerely believe, are ready enough to do the forgetting if Englishmen will do the remembering. Unfortunately you cannot very well remember what you have never known; and most Englishmen’s ignorance of Anglo-Irish history is profound and comprehensive. I do not want you to close this book abruptly, and therefore I do not propose to inflict upon you a digest of the whole of Anglo-Irish history—though it would be an admirable thing in these highly-disciplined days if your rulers were to pass a law compelling every English child to learn Irish history, as every Irish child is compelled to learn English history, instead of merely the fragmentary collection of dates and disjointed, and usually garbled, incidents which most of us learned at school. But the history of yesterday is—in Ireland, at least—the politics of to-day, and some salient features of Irish and Anglo-Irish history must be emphasised because they exert a continuing influence upon the present and bear directly upon Ireland’s attitude towards the War.

We must go a long way back for not the least important of them. Ireland shared with the Scandinavian countries, alone in Western Europe, the distinction of never coming under the influence of the Roman Empire. It is a distinction of capital importance. Rome imposed upon all the rest of the Western world a common mental discipline, a common habit of mind, a common currency of thought. There is an indefinable "something" in Great Britain and all Continental countries which invests them with a corporate quality and makes them a collective entity. London, Paris, Berlin are very different capitals of very different nations; but in all of them you will detect a certain familiarity of atmosphere which tells you that you are in Europe, and which you will not find, for example, in Bombay or Peking. This "something" is that Roman culture which, temporarily submerged beneath the waves of barbarism, rose again to the surface and conquered by virtue of superiority of intellect its conquerors by virtue of superiority of force. In that first creation of modern Europe, in that welding of diverse races into a community which we call European—in that revolutionary influence upon the life of the Western world Ireland did not share. There began in that early age that remoteness of Ireland from Europe which persists to this day.

Those Scandinavian countries which, in common with Ireland, were isolated from the Roman influence early lost this isolation and were brought within the broad sweep of European life. Their people were



adventurers of the sea, raiders and traffickers. They carried their arms all round the coasts of Europe into the Mediterranean. Thus they came within the absorbent influence of the Roman culture. Inhabiting a Continental country, moreover, they offered no obstacle to its direct penetration to their homes from without. But it was Ireland's destiny that she should not thus be absorbed. Her island remoteness offered an obstacle which did not exist in the case of the Scandinavian countries. That obstacle might have been overcome, for her people, too, though not to the same extent as the Scandinavians, were adventurers of the sea, raiders and traffickers. "*Dis aliter visum.*" The Roman culture, when it came at last to Ireland by the agency of the Anglo-Normans, came in a form antagonistic, a form which offered a challenge to her own culture, a form which threw the Irish people into that attitude of protest which, like their remoteness from Europe, and confirming that remoteness, persists to this day.

After that early remoteness of Ireland from the Roman influence which fashioned Europe and left its stamp upon European life, the next salient feature in Irish history is the individual quality of this Irish culture with which the Roman culture—when it had hardened to a type and lost that faculty of adaptiveness which it possessed in the case of the nations upon which it earlier imposed itself—came into collision. You belong to a Roman, a European, people. For you the Roman culture is the highest culture which the world saw at that stage of the

progress of civilisation. But the primitive Irish culture was in some respects higher. "We look to Rome for political and military organisation, for roads and aqueducts and agriculture, for a great system of law and for ideals of colonisation. But she offers us no philosophy of life, no guide in morals, no theology except obedience to her military will, no theory of life apart from hard facts. For philosophical thought, for ideas, we must look to Greece, and to the East." I quote the passage from a recently-published book, *The Manufacture of Historical Material*, by Mr. J. W. Jeudwine, an independent student of the origins of history, with a passion for impartiality, from whose valuable work I shall have occasion to quote further. Mr. Jeudwine adopts the theory that some knowledge of Greek philosophy, some of the speculative spirit of the ancient pagan world, came to Ireland from Greece. There is a persistent tradition of Mediterranean origin that certain tribes crossed Europe to Ireland from Mycenae. It is enshrined in the *Lebar Gabala*, or *Book of Conquests*, the ancient Irish work which deals with the legends of the five successive waves of immigration into Ireland, and ascribes the origin of all of them to Greece.

Whether it derived from Greece or elsewhere, the primitive Irish civilization and social code possessed a peculiarly distinctive quality of nationality. In the dark ages, between the overthrow of the Roman Empire by violence, and the re-assertion of the Roman influence by its innate superiority over its

barbaric conquerors, Ireland gave Christianity and learning to much of Northern Europe. Long before the advent of Christianity, however, a relatively high state of culture existed in Ireland. Some form of literature existed here centuries before the arrival of Saint Patrick. Cormac Mac Art (A.D. 254), one of the most illustrious of the pagan kings of Ireland, founded three colleges at Tara—one for the study of military science, one for history and literature, and one for law. In all these branches of culture the ancient Irish civilization was well advanced, but especially in the peaceful branches. Irish raids on a great scale troubled the Roman occupation of Britain in its wane. Niall of the Nine Hostages, the most famous of the pagan kings of Ireland, led formidable invasions of Wales and Gaul. His successor, the last pagan king, was killed at the foot of the Alps. Saint Patrick, on his arrival in the country, found literary and professional men—Druids, poets, antiquarians. In the realm of art, pen-work, metal-work, sculpture, and music attested a relatively high stage of development. From the middle of the sixth century schools rapidly arose all over the country, most of them in connection with monasteries; in all the more important there were students from foreign lands, from the Continent as well as from Britain, whence, in the words of Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherburne (A.D. 705-709), they came “in fleet-loads.”

In the ancient Litany of Aengus the Culdee, we find invoked many Romans, Gauls, Germans, Britons, and even Egyptians, all of whom died in

Ireland, which, in the course of three or four centuries from the time of Saint Patrick, became the most learned country in Europe—" *insula sanctorum et doctorum.*" Besides the monastic schools, which gave a good general and not a purely ecclesiastical education, there were schools purely lay and professional for the teaching of law, medicine, poetry and literature. Irishmen in large numbers travelled in Britain and on the Continent spreading Christianity and secular knowledge. They penetrated even to Iceland, where the first Scandinavian colonists found bells, books and croziers and other traces of Irish missionaries. The estimation in which they were held on the Continent is sufficiently proved by the fact that they were employed in most of the schools and colleges of Britain, France, Germany and Italy; in many Continental towns Irishmen are venerated to this day as patron saints. Science and art and learning of every kind were brought to their highest state of perfection in the ninth and tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century. They were impaired by the Danish inroads and the subsequent civil strife, but they survived in great measure towards the end of the twelfth century at the time of the English invasion.

## III.

I HAVE sketched, in the merest outline, some aspects of that Golden Age of Ireland to which all Irishmen of education look back with intense pride, because a great mass of Englishmen—even educated Englishmen—are wholly ignorant of it, and because they will never understand Ireland unless they know something about it. There are schools in England where they teach good Greek and Latin, but where they represent that Ireland, which produced an epic literature that challenges comparison with the literature of Greece and Rome, as a country hopelessly barbarous and savage, and redeemed from that condition only by the English Conquest. It dies hard, that distortion of history which poisons the wells of truth at their source and gives a false colour to the whole English outlook upon Ireland. It denies the very existence, let alone the virtue, of the primitive Irish social code. But the Anglo-Irish conflict is in its origins a conflict between two opposed systems of law, expressing opposed social principles. One, the Brehon Law of Ireland, expressed a communal society—common ownership among kinsmen, and a ruler who, like the guardians of Plato's ideal Republic, was supported by contributions from the people. The other, the Roman-feudal law, expressed tenancy of the land by an individual holder who accepted the grant from a lord not akin. The former social conception, at once aristocratic and



democratic—aristocratic in leadership, democratic in its economic basis, with the most powerful character elected as chief, while the land was the property of the clan—lies at the root of Irish culture, and is still to some extent ingrained in the Irish people.

Evidence, both historical and modern, is to be found of the innate superiority of the Irish culture over the English culture which first assailed it seven centuries ago. "Ireland played Cleopatra to the Antony of the invaders. Some of them, indeed, the 'Garrison' pure and simple, had all their interests centred not only in resisting but in calumniating her. But the majority yielded gaily to her music, her poetry, her sociability, that magical quality of hers which the Germans call '*Gemütlichkeit*.' In a few centuries a new and enduring phrase had designated them as more Irish than the Irish themselves. So far as any superiority of civilisation manifests itself in the first period, it is altogether on the side of Ireland. This power of assimilation has never decayed. There never was a nation, not even the United States, that so subdued and re-fashioned those who came to her shores, that so wrought them into her own blood and tissue. The Norman Baron is transformed in a few centuries into an Irish chieftain, and as often as not an Irish 'rebel.' The Jacobite planter of the first decade of the seventeenth century is in the fifth decade found in arms against Cromwell. The Cromwellian settler is destined in turn to shed his blood for James II. and Catholicity. Protestant colonists who, in the early eighteenth century, enforce and defend the abominable penal

laws, will in 1782 demand, with drawn swords, that henceforth there shall be no longer a Protestant colony, but in its place an Irish nation."

"The personal history of the captains of the Irish cause in modern times is no less remarkable. O'Connell begins his public career in the Yeomanry called out to put down the insurrectionary movement of Emmet. Isaac Butt comes first into note as the orator of the Orange Party in Dublin. Parnell himself steps out of a Tory milieu and tradition into a central tumult of agitation. Wave after incoming wave of them, the conquerors were conquered. 'Once again,' said Parnell in the last public utterance of his life, 'I am come to cast myself into the deep sea of the love of my people.' In that deep sea a hundred diverse currents have met and mingled; they have lost their individual drift to become part of the strong tide of national consciousness and national unity. If Irish history is to be regarded as a test of racial superiority, then Ireland emerges with the crown and garland of victory. We came, we the invaders, to dominate, and we remained to serve. For Ireland has signed us with the oil and chrism of her human sacrament, and even though we should deny the faith with our lips she would hold our hearts to the end." If those words jar upon an ear attuned, if acquainted with Irish cadences at all, to the shrill and discordant notes of a Froude, I would ask you to remember that they are the words of Kettle, who died, for Ireland and for England, at Ginchy.

In that power of assimilation resides the historical

vindication of the essential superiority of the ancient Irish culture. But there is also a modern vindication. The ancient Irish character, as Mr. George Russell ("Æ") has noted, has begun to reassert itself in modern times in Ireland, and it is in essentials what it was two thousand years ago. The modern expression of that antique national mood which found its first manifestation in the ancient clan, and expressed itself in its external aspects in a communal civilisation, in an economic brotherhood, is the co-operative movement. It is well worth noting, in these days when there is some tendency in England to disparage everything Irish, that the co-operative movement in these islands, started in Ireland, is beginning to capture the imagination of the whole English-speaking, and indeed of much of the European, world. The whole tendency of modern civilization is towards that communal civilization which found primitive expression in the ancient Irish social code, and away from the capitalistic system which found primitive expression in the Roman-Anglo-Norman feudal tenure. With the development of civilization the basis of society—the land—has tended to be submerged, but the fundamentals of civilization remain essentially the same. It is a singular vindication of the ancient Irish culture that its modern spirit to-day is gradually reconquering the modern spirit of that feudal system which first came into collision with it seven centuries ago, and spent several centuries afterwards in an almost completely successful effort to destroy it.



There is another aspect of this matter which may be noted here. "Ireland," said Kettle, in introducing the passage quoted above, "Ireland, unvisited by the legions and the law of Rome, had evolved a different vision of the life of men in community, or, in other words, a different idea of the State. Put very briefly, the difference lay in this. The Romans and their inheritors organized for purposes of war and order, the Irish for purposes of culture. The one laid the emphasis on police, the other on poets. . . . In a world in which right is little more than a secretion of might, in which, unless a strong man armed keeps house, his enemies enter in, the weakness of the Gaelic ideal is obvious. But the Roman pattern, too, had a characteristic vice which has led logically in our own time to a monster and sinister growth of armaments. To those who recognize in this deification of war the blackest menace of our day, the vision of a culture State is not without charm. The shattering possibilities enfolded in it would have fevered Nietzsche and fascinated Rénan."

These words were written when the European war was no more than a vague menace. To-day, in the midst of the war, we find that it is those in Ireland who desire, through the co-operative movement, to reincarnate the ancient Irish mood, to realise "the vision of a culture State"—it is those who hold, or believe they hold, in that inspiration the only means of making wars to cease upon the earth. "Nations," says "Æ," at once an idealist and one of the most profound thinkers upon practical

affairs in these islands, "nations act towards other nations as their own citizens act towards each other. When slavery existed in a State, if that nation attacked another, it was with intent to enslave. Where there is fierce economic competition between citizen and citizen, then in war with another nation, the object of the war is to destroy the trade of the other. If the citizens in any country could develop harmonious life among themselves, they would manifest the friendliest feelings towards the people of other countries. We find that it is just among groups of people who aim at harmonious life, co-operators and socialists, that the strongest national impulses to human brotherhood arise, and wars of domination are brought about by the will of those who within a State are dominant over the fortunes of the rest. . . . It must be mainly in movements inspired by the ideal of the brotherhood of man that the spirit will be generated which, in the future, shall make the idea of war so detestable that statesmen will find it as impossible to think of that solution of their disputes as they would think now of resorting to private assassination of political opponents. . . . The economic brotherhood which I have put forward as an Irish ideal would, in its realization, make us at peace with ourselves, and if we are at peace with ourselves, we will be at peace with our neighbours and with other nations, and will wish them the goodwill we have among ourselves, and will receive from them the same goodwill."

## IV.

I HAVE made above a considerable digression from my main theme, but that digression is perhaps worth making, if it contributes in any degree to the removal of that false colour which the distortion of history has given to the whole English outlook upon Ireland. We have seen that the ancient Irish culture has a historical vindication in its power of assimilation exercised upon the invaders. We have seen that it has a modern vindication in its present-day reincarnation, the co-operative movement. And Englishmen now, when the black menace of war has been realised, will perhaps appreciate the charm of "the vision of a culture State." They will realise that the primitive conception of such a State which was enshrined in Ireland had every right to fight for its life against that Roman conception which the Anglo-Normans sought to impose on it—that conception with "the characteristic vice which has led logically in our own time to a monstrous and sinister growth of armaments," and finally to European war.

They will perhaps realise, in short, that the English invasion, seven centuries ago, possessed no character of an attempt to impose culture on a country hopelessly barbarous and savage, but was the impact upon an innately superior social code, the Irish code, of an innately inferior code, the English code, which waged relentless war upon it. "The prominence which Ireland obtains throughout

her history in this respect"—I quote Mr. Jeudwine again—"has been owing to the fact that with her the conflict of legal system began and long continued when her communal form of society was in full operation, while in other parts of the islands the battle was only fought when it was in a state of decomposition or decadence, or when other causes, such as the nearness to England, or the expansion of trade, which, owing to English control of the sea-ports, has always been denied to any part of Ireland except to Ulster, had reconciled men to the feudal society." "The Irish law continued to expand with the needs of a changing society . . . and it continued to do so with an equitable practice far in advance of the English common law, until, being incompatible with the advantages to the Crown to be gained by the enforcement of the feudal law, it was crushed and abolished by the Jacobean lawyers, who imagined, as so many English and Scots then and since have imagined, that ideas of law and morals must be evil and unsocial which would not square with the decayed feudalism which culminated in the divine right of kings."

"The Roman law had afforded on the Continent a foundation on which the customary codes of the barbarians could be supported and varied. But in Ireland there was no such basis of law common to both systems. In the Continental development, the Romans, though in the position of a conquered people, held all the *prestige* of men who had been the acknowledged masters of the world; the barbarians revered their laws and copied them. The



laws of Ireland held no such predominance in men's minds over the feudal customs of their invaders, nor had their religious and social customs such superiority over the refinements of the English Court as to entitle them to an equal use." Mr. Jeudwine notes that the literary and legal writers of the seventeenth century, and even of the centuries before them, seem to have been well aware in their minds of the healthy character of the unwritten law which they set about to destroy, and of the good character of the men who administered them. Among the causes which deterred them from applying this knowledge, he suggests "literary conceit, the vanity which rests upon a consciousness of supposed mental superiority, such as has overtaken the German people at the present day; the great Elizabethan and Jacobean world of poetry and prose in its prime could not fail to despise the undeveloped imaginative literature of the politically weaker nation, expressed in 'an obscure and unknown language' of which they were wholly ignorant." This, among other causes, "helped to bring about that extraordinary habit of trying to govern and to absorb Ireland in unbounded ignorance of her history, literature and laws, which, coming to full fruition in the seventeenth century, has endured to our sorrow to the present day."

The Brehon Law of Ireland was a mixture of barbaric custom resting on primeval socialism, and of equitable doctrines resting on a foundation of philosophic thought. It comprised a great body of civil, military and criminal law. It regulated the

various ranks of society, from the King down to the slave, and enumerated their several rights and privileges. There were minute rules for the management of property; for the several industries—building, brewing, mills, water-courses, fishing-weirs, bees and honey; for distress or seizure of goods; for titles, trespass and evidence. The relations of landlord and tenant—when these developed out of the communal holding, which, however, always remained the largest element in the clan land; the fees of professional men—doctors, judges, teachers, artificers; the mutual duties of father and son, of foster-parents and foster-children, of master and servant, were all carefully regulated. Contracts were regarded as peculiarly sacred, and were treated in great detail. In criminal law the various offences were minutely distinguished, and injuries of all kinds as between man and man were allowed for by a compensation payment. To make due allowance for all modifying circumstances in cases of trial called for much legal knowledge and technical skill on the part of the Brehon. And these exponents of the law were inspired by a high ideal. “Three falsehoods which God most avenges in a territory,” it is written in the Ancient Laws of Ireland, “are additional gain by false contract; decision by false witnesses; false judgment for hire.”

The Irish people have been called lawless. That is not their historical character when they enjoyed their own laws. Moore has commemorated in his song “Rich and rare were the gems she wore” the legend, illustrating the peaceful and prosperous state

of Ireland in the reign of Brian Boru in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, that a fair maiden, richly dressed, and bearing a ring of priceless value on her wand, travelled the country alone from north to south without being molested; and, as we have seen, those very English writers who disparaged the Irish people, and their law, admitted the validity of its sanctions.

Payne, an English "undertaker" of forfeited lands in County Cork in the reign of Elizabeth, says of the Irish that "they keep their promises faithfully and are more desirous of peace than an Englishman. They are obedient to the laws, so that you may travel through all the land without any danger or injurie offered of the very worst Irish, and be greatly releevd of the best." Spenser speaks of the Brehon Law as "a rule of right unwritten, but delivered from one to another, in which oftentimes there appeareth great show of equity." Coke says of the Irish that "there is no nation of the Christian world that are greater lovers of justice than they are, which virtue must of necessity be accompanied by many others"; and Sir John Davies, James I.'s Attorney-General, uses almost the same words:—"There is no nation of people under the sun that doth love equal and indifferent justice better than the Irish, or will not rest better satisfied with the execution thereof, though it be against themselves, so as they may have the protection and benefit of the law when upon just cause they do desire it. . . . For the truth is, that in time of peace the Irish are more fearful to offend the law than the English or any other nation whatsoever."

## V.

UPON this primitive Irish civilization and the Brehon Law which supported it broke the violence of the English invasion, and for nearly four centuries of conquest-agony in Ireland the invaders waged bitter and relentless war upon the civilization and the law. We find their disastrous rôle unfolded with vivid accuracy in the pages of M. Paul Dubois. "Had Ireland," he wrote, "been left to herself, she would in all human probability have succeeded, in spite of her decadence, in establishing political unity under a military chief. Had the country been brought into peaceful contact with Continental civilization, it must have advanced along the path of modern progress. Even if it had been conquered by a powerful nation, it would at least have participated in the progress of the conquering power. But none of these things happened. England, whose political and social development had been hastened by the Norman Conquest, desired to extend her influence to Ireland. . . . But in actual fact she only succeeded in trammelling the development of Irish society, and maintaining in the country an appalling condition of decadent stagnation, as the result of three centuries and a half of intermittent invasion, never followed by conquest."

Why the conquest took so long was pointed out more than three centuries ago by that same Sir John Davies, whose good opinion of the Irish law we have just quoted—the Attorney-General of James I. In



the first place, the force employed at the outset was wholly insufficient for conquest. In the next place, there was no adequate representative in Ireland of royalty with state and power to overawe the whole people, both native and colonial. The great Anglo-Norman lords had too much power in their hands, and for their own selfish ends kept the country in a state of perpetual warfare. Great tracts of land belonged to absentees living in England, who merely drew their rents and did nothing for the country. Finally, the English Government did not treat the Irish—who would have welcomed any strong government able and willing to maintain order, and had accepted the English King at the outset as their *Ardri* or overlord—as subjects to be cared for, and neither upheld their own law nor placed them under the law that ruled the colonists. Instead it treated them as enemies, and at once refused them the protection of English law and declined to recognize the Brehon Law either for themselves or for the settlers who were absorbed by them. It attempted by all means in its power, if not to exterminate the race, at least to repress the national life and stamp out the institutions of this people which had maintained in Romanised Europe a peculiar individuality.

Two centuries after the beginning of the Conquest that vicious principle found statutory recognition in the Statute of Kilkenny. It carried out consistently the fatal policy of separation adopted by the Government from the beginning. Its chief aim was to withdraw the English settlers from all contact

with "the Irish enemies"—as the natives were designated all through the Act—and to separate the two races for ever. Intermarriage, traffic, or intimate relations of any kind with the Irish were forbidden as high treason, punishable by death. If any man took a name after the Irish fashion, used the Irish language or dress, or adopted any other Irish custom, all his lands were forfeit. The Irish living among the English were permitted to remain, but were forbidden to use the Irish language under the same penalty. To use or submit to the Brehon Law was treason.

I quote Mr. Jeudwine once more :—"When the settlers in the English Pale gave way before the counter-attack of the native Irish in conjunction with the old Anglo-Irish feudal lords acting as Irish chiefs under the Brehon Law, the English kings, unable to enforce feudal custom upon the Irish whether in or beyond the Pale, took the course of treating the Brehon Law as 'wicked and damnable,' 'hateful to God and repugnant to all justice, which reasonably ought not to be called law, being a bad custom.' They refused to acknowledge it in any form and punished where they were able both those who obeyed its provisions and those who administered them, while refusing to the Irish, except in the most exceptional cases, the use or benefit of their own Anglo-Norman custom. They do not appear even to have attempted to understand either the principles or the practice of the Irish law."

"How far the Anglo-Norman law could be enforced depended from henceforth on physical

strength, which becomes the sole test of obedience. The English King, from being an acknowledged *Ardri*, acknowledged apparently quite as much as any of his predecessors of Irish origin, became a foreigner enforcing a foreign yoke on a reluctant people. The two systems of unwritten law, English and Irish, each beautifully unconscious of the ideals which lay at the heart of the other, struggle on side by side through the centuries, the one supported by the Papal power resting on the King's *dominiun*, on the theory of the grant of all land to individuals or communities, the other, outlaw and prohibited, on a conception of social life in which all had the use of the land. The longer the conflict went on the more bitter it grew, the weaker politically and the stronger nationally grew the social ideals before the physical force, first of England, and later of England and Scotland combined, before the feudal power of the King as owner of the whole soil. . . . To the English the Brehon Law became only the 'bad custom' of a banned and outlaw alien enemy, regulating the life of an outlawed race with whom the State was waging a bitter and relentless war."

It was not until the reign of James I. that the King thought fit to receive the Irish into his protection, and to attempt to remodel the holding of land under the decayed feudalism of his day. But the conception of the Irish as an enemy and inferior race continued to dominate the policy of the English Government in other directions. It was responsible for the settled policy of the Tudors to "anglicise" the Irish people. To accomplish this end the

Government employed all the agencies, including that of education, at its disposal. Acts were passed commanding the people to drop their Irish language and learn English, and to ride, dress and live after the English fashion. The legislators undertook even to regulate how the hair was to be worn, and how the head was to be clipped, and, for women, the colour of their dress, the number of yards of material they were to use, the sort of hats they were to wear.

That conception of the Irish as an enemy and inferior race, and the persisting conflict between the Irish and English systems of land tenure, were further responsible for the infamous policy of plantation. When, by the reign of Henry VIII., the English conquest had extended over the whole country, many of the Irish chiefs and the Anglo-Irish lords who had relapsed into the position of tribal chiefs had been invested after their submission with English titles. It was the beginning of the period when sea power was becoming a decisive factor in European war, and Ireland, then as now, was the Achilles' heel of England. In these circumstances the English Government sought for a device by which it could secure that if a chief, encouraged by the prospect of help from abroad, rose in rebellion against oppression, his lands should give no further foothold to potential invaders. Land held upon feudal tenure would be subject—under that law of treason, developed in the reign of Edward III., under which Roger Casement was tried and condemned—to forfeiture. But the feudal law, which recognized no rights apart from the King's



grant, was widely resisted by the Irish, who all had some interest in the common soil, and according to whose law only a share of the land—known as the mensal land—was owned by the chief, who was elected to the chiefship from the chief's family upon the death of his predecessor. Upon the death of a chief who had an English title, therefore, there ensued a double quarrel between Irish and English law—between the law of *tanistry*, by which the new chief was elected, and the English law of primogeniture; and between the feudal and the communal system of land-holding.

Finally the English Government evolved the simple plan of solving the problem by dispossessing the Irish who were anti-feudal and whose system contained no restraint upon rebellion, and replacing them by English and Scottish settlers who would accept their land on feudal tenure. This policy of plantation culminated in the ferocious expropriation of Oliver Cromwell, who, at the end of a campaign in Ireland which supplied the historical model for the Prussian policy of military "ruthlessness," offered the Irish people of the three provinces of Leinster, Munster and Ulster the alternatives of "Hell or Connacht." It illustrates the deep gulf fixed between Ireland and England that, while Cromwell is probably the most popular figure in English history, because in England he overthrew the divine right of kings, in Ireland to this day no man can wish you worse than "the curse of Cromwell," because he denied the Irish the divine right to live.

## VI.

IN less than a century there were three great confiscations and plantations in Ireland—the first after the Geraldine and O'Neill Rebellions; the second in the time of Cromwell; the third after the victory of William over James II. These three included the whole island, except the estates of half-a-dozen families of English blood. Moreover, the three confiscations sometimes overlapped, so that large areas were confiscated twice, and some three times over, in that period. In the result, only above one-seventh of the land of all Ireland was left in the hands of the Irish Roman Catholics. There followed immediately the rigorous application of the penal enactments, which deprived them of all civil and religious rights.

Economic prosperity will serve, not certainly as an antidote—so much the recent history of Ireland has sufficiently proved—but at least as an anodyne for political ills. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, in spite of all Ireland's troubles, several branches of her manufacture, trade, and commerce were prospering. But now, as if oppression in other directions were not enough, the ingrained hostility of the English people—and it is worth noting that it was now the hostility of the people, not merely of the governing class—towards the Irish assumed a new shape. To the English merchants and traders Ireland's prosperity seemed to be their loss, and they persuaded the English Parliament to ruin

the trade of Ireland—except that in linen—by enforcing commercial restrictions. The English Navigation Act of 1660, as amended in 1663, prohibited all exports from Ireland to the Colonies, and also, in the interest of English graziers, prohibited temporarily the import of Irish cattle and horses into England. Three years later this prohibition was made permanent. These Acts almost destroyed the Irish cattle and shipping trades. Driven from cattle-rearing, the Irish applied themselves to other industries, especially that of wool, for which the country was well suited. As early as the reign of Charles I., Strafford had adopted measures to cripple the flourishing Irish trade in wool and woollen cloths, though he mitigated his offence by laying the foundations of the great linen industry in Ulster. Despite Strafford's measures, the Irish wool industry revived; but in 1699 it was finally extinguished. The English cloth dealers petitioned to have it suppressed, and William III., in his speech from the Throne, undertook to do so. Accordingly an export duty of four shillings in the pound on fine woollen cloths, and of two shillings in the pound on frieze and flannel, was imposed; and at the same time an Act was passed prohibiting the Irish from exporting either wool or woollen goods to any part of the world except Liverpool, Chester, and some Bristol Channel ports, and no woollens were to be shipped to them from any Irish ports except Drogheda, Dublin, Waterford, Youghal, Cork, and Kinsale.

These disastrous restrictions accomplished everything that the English traders looked for; they killed the Irish wool trade. Then began the emigration from want of employment, which—like so many of the legacies of Irish history—continues to this day. Subsequently England interfered with almost every branch of Irish trade and manufacture—beer, malt, oats, cotton, silk, gunpowder, iron ware. In 1776 the embargo laid upon the export of provisions from Irish ports in order to cheapen supplies for the British Army, as well as to prevent supplies from reaching America, almost ruined the farmers and also the trade in salted beef and other such commodities. It is important to observe here that these restrictions coincided with a spacious period of international development. Their effect was to exclude Ireland from a share not only in the European exchange of commerce, but also in the European exchange of ideas.

When, at the end of the eighteenth century, these restrictions were removed, and trade was partially relieved, the remedy came too late. It is easier to extinguish a trade than to revive it. Some branches of trade and manufacture had been killed outright, others permanently injured. The trade in wool, the staple industry of Ireland, which was kept down for nearly a century, never recovered its former state of prosperity. It is the consequence of all this destructive legislation that Ireland outside Ulster has to-day comparatively little manufacture and commerce, but is predominantly agricultural; and this again aggravated the land troubles which inherited from the time of the plantations.



It is unnecessary to refer to the events of the past century with which English schoolboys are given a passable familiarity, though it is usually a familiarity distorted by the divorce of these later events from their origins in earlier history. I have deliberately refrained from touching, beyond a passing reference to the penal laws, upon the feud of religion superadded by the events of the sixteenth century to the tragic story of Ireland. Its effects are reduced now to the proportions of a domestic Irish question, and it is with Anglo-Irish relations alone that I am here concerned. You, as a people to-day, are a people of the largest tolerance in religious matters; and in the past your persecution of the faith of the majority in Ireland was in its origins political rather than religious, and intended rather to assert the power of the King over the power of the Papacy, than designed out of any real hostility to that faith. For their part, I think—I write as a Protestant—the Roman Catholic people of Ireland more readily forgive your effort, now long abandoned, to destroy the faith which they share with other European countries, than they can forgive your effort to destroy the nationality which is their individual and most cherished possession.\*

\* For a convenient summary of the commercial restrictions, as elsewhere in the preceding pages, I must record an indebtedness to Dr. P. W. Joyce's compact "History."

## VII.

I HAVE no doubt that I have wearied you by this brief and general sketch of some salient aspects of Irish history, but these aspects are emphasised for a purpose which will now appear. "This book," you will say, "professes to contain 'some thoughts on Anglo-Irish relations and the War.' There is much written here about Anglo-Irish relations in the past: but what has this ancient history to do with the War?" It has very much to do with the War.

Observe the effect of this history upon Ireland's present attitude in relation to Europe. You have here a nation which, alone in Europe, stood outside the Roman community. You have a nation of a peculiarly intense individuality, of a peculiarly distinctive culture. You have this nation, this culture, assailed by another nation of a culture essentially inferior, essentially inimical to it. You have this nation engaged for centuries in a deadly struggle of resistance to the powerful, persistent, and vindictive efforts of the other nation to destroy its institutions, its culture, its nationality, its very life. You have this nation with its whole thought, its whole energy, its whole essence, concentrated first upon resistance to this monstrous aggression, and later, when it had all but perished, upon the task of recovery, of re-asserting its nationality. You have, in a word, a phenomenon unique in Europe. You have a nation so compelled by its destiny to the

most intense preoccupation with its own affairs—an island nation, moreover, situated upon the verge of Europe, and carefully excluded by the commercial restrictions from taking a part in the European exchange alike of commerce and of ideas—that all that interplay of influences which have gone to the making of modern Europe, all those convulsions of thought and action out of which modern Europe emerged to the legacies of our time, have passed it by almost so completely as to leave no mark upon it.

You have, in a word, an Ireland which is in Europe, but not of Europe : a country which, historically and in all other respects than the accident of geography, is essentially extra-European.

The French know their Ireland better than the English. They know her better because they are more a kindred race, and because they have made it their business to know her better. How many Englishmen are aware that at the Quai d'Orsay there is a department of the French Foreign Office which is concerned exclusively with Irish affairs—and a department which has at its head a Breton who knows that Irish language with which no English statesman has even a bowing acquaintance, of whose very existence many Englishmen are ignorant ? The French, I say, know their Ireland better than the English. Let me quote you, in support of the case for the remoteness of Ireland from Europe, something which was written by a Frenchman some sixty years ago. In 1855, after a period of European convulsion, M. Emile Montégut, a writer less well

known in these countries than he deserves to be, contributed to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* an article on John Mitchel, the "Young Irishman," to which he gave the sub-title of "A Study in Irish Nationalism." It opened with these words: "In the year 1848, when every throne in Europe rocked, and every race was disturbed, Ireland had her own little rebellion; it was easily suppressed. This revolutionary attempt passed, so to speak, unperceived. No one troubled about the fate of Ireland, or had a tear of pity for her prisoners, one of whom was descended from the ancient kings of Munster. The Catholics themselves, the only party in Europe which at any time has shown sympathy for Ireland, were unmoved." There is the reverse of the medal. As Ireland is remote from Europe, so is Europe remote from Ireland.

This attitude of Europe towards Ireland M. Montégut proceeded to explain in two ways. "In the first place, the nearness of England will always be hurtful to the poor sister Cinderella. . . In the next place, the singular character of this nation escapes the judgment of democratic crowds and vulgar multitudes; it can only interest a few individuals who have sufficient moral elevation to understand certain delicacies which disappear from day to day. . . The Celtic character, like monastic life, like the passion of the ideal, like delicacy of sentiment, evades the appreciation of the vulgar. . . If the oppressor of Ireland were Austria or Russia, no invective, no anger, would suffice to denounce the injustice and cruelty of the tyrant. Unhappily the



oppressor of Ireland is England—Protestant England, constitutional, liberal, industrial and trading England, the most accomplished type of the modern nation, the model of nineteenth century civilisation. How could the men of our time be expected to take Ireland's part? Has Ireland invented spinning looms, railways, steamboats? What inventions, what service, does Europe owe to her?"

"These are the true arguments of the merchants, the industrialists, the economists; they are a very numerous and important race to-day, and their tendency is to think of every subject in terms of cotton and oil. Can Ireland, the politicians ask in these terms, provide a government of a more intelligent and reasonable kind than the English Government? Has she any other ideal of government than the Celtic plan, the power of a half-savage aristocracy tempered by the religious fervour of the priest: two powers which all the nations have renounced, and which can no longer regulate a complicated society like ours? This is the view of the influential, opulent, enlightened section of European society. Abandoned by these all-powerful classes, can the Irish count at least on the sympathies of the revolutionists? No. The most anarchical Irishman, the most fiery partisan of physical force, is in fact less versed in liberal ideas than the most obstinate Monarchist on the Continent. John Mitchel, assuredly the most violent of the Young Irelanders, is, at bottom, less revolutionary than the average English shop-keeper. He is revolutionary on the surface, in his accent and expression, but



not in spirit or in principle. Nor is the obstinate attachment of the Irish to Catholicism calculated to conquer the sympathies of the radicals. In short, neither the extreme nor the moderate sections of modern society set store on Ireland, and she finds them in turn indifferent and lukewarm toward her cause."

"By virtue of her position Ireland cannot expect that public opinion will be excited by her misfortunes as it might be by the misfortunes of other people. The shadow of England covers her. The contrast with the land of liberty, of commerce, of industry, is too striking, and must mislead the masses. . . . English publicity is immense, and all Europe reads English newspapers; but who reads Irish journals and pamphlets? In these polemics England always speaks the last word, and, just as English civilization harms the cause of Ireland, so the noise of English publicity stifles the voice of the Irish people; in this ugly struggle Europe only hears the voice of England."

"There is another and more profound reason. Our manner of judgment to-day is essentially prosaic and *bourgeois*; we weigh and we measure things, peoples, races, as we measure oil or as we weigh stuffs. All that cannot be classed and numbered is valueless in our eyes. A man has only a productive and commercial value; and the more a people produces, the greater it is. . . . The modern world, which only esteems what it can see and touch, is not grateful to Ireland for her seductive gifts, and in fact, this unhappy race is entirely isolated in our

Occident; in all that exists nothing resembles it, nowhere does it find a reflection of itself."

This indifference of Europe to Ireland which M. Montégut pictures is the product of that remoteness of Ireland from European influences which is in turn the product of her introspective history. All the revolutions of thought which convulsed and transformed Europe passed Ireland by, or came to her in a form which more than ever drove her in upon herself. Take, for example, the Reformation. What produced for much of Europe a liberation of thought produced for Ireland merely a novel variety of oppression. Take, again, the French Revolution; we have just seen M. Montégut's estimate of its influence, or absence of influence, upon "Young Ireland."

You will discover essentially the same sense of remoteness even in Ireland's foreign relations. It is impossible to credit Ireland historically with any consistent or principled foreign policy. That policy was entirely opportunist, controlled entirely by the exigencies of her quarrel with England. Let me quote M. Montégut on John Mitchel again in this connection. "Do not ask if he is Catholic, Liberal or Republican; do not ask what government he would give to Ireland. He hardly knows. He does know that he hates England with all the forces of his soul, and that there is no party in Europe of which he is not prepared to declare himself the defender, provided that England perish. French *sans-culottes*, Austrian aristocrats, Russian despotism please him in turn. The (French) revolu-

tion of February drives him to revolt; but do not think he is consistent with himself, and that he was much afflicted by the death of the Republic! Of all succeeding events he asks but one thing: will they or will they not hurt England? Do they contain an occasion for the humiliation of Carthage? He applauds Mazzini, the enemy of Catholicism; likewise he would applaud an Ultramontane Bishop of Ireland blessing the standards of a Celtic insurrection. He salutes the French Republic with hope; but when on the pontoons of Bermuda he hears of Louis Napoleon's election to the Presidency, he gives a great shout of joy; on his arrival in America he hears the news from the East and echoes the warlike trumpets of the Czar which resound on the Danube. On each of these events he hears the good news—England's agony!"

All down her history Ireland's foreign policy is consistent only in its inconsistency. The rebels of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries found themselves allied with Spain; the rebels of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with France; the rebels of 1916 with Germany. The last fact is to most English people the crowning wickedness of the Rebellion of 1916; how, they ask, could Irishmen link themselves with such a people as the Germans have proved themselves to be? The indignant question is, in truth, quite beside the point. The characteristics and institutions of Germany were no more to a tiny minority of the Irish people who rose in 1916 than were the characteristics and institutions of Spain or France to the

National rebellions of the past—which is to say that they were nothing. All that counted with Irish rebels in 1916, as in 1600 or 1798, was that such or such a Power was England's enemy. Ireland's foreign relations, in a word, have always been no more than the incidents, accidents, of her quarrel with England. They emphasise, rather than minimise, the essential remoteness of Ireland from Europe.

## VIII.

THE position of Ireland has not changed essentially since M. Montégut wrote the words just quoted. There have been great changes in Ireland; but her relation to Europe has not changed. Indeed, her absorption in her own affairs, to the almost complete exclusion of interest in European affairs, has been increased rather than diminished. The interval has been occupied by a new phase in her history. If one may borrow a military metaphor, whereas her attitude in the preceding centuries had been essentially defensive, it was in the last fifty years essentially offensive. Before she was engaged in a desperate defence of her nationality and her national institutions against persistent and vindictive efforts to destroy them. But now the *rôles* were reversed. It became a question not how far England could press her centuries-long campaign for the destruction of Irish nationality, but of how far she could deny the efforts of that nationality to reassert itself, and find its fullest expression.

My military metaphor would have been still more apt if I had said that Ireland was now engaged upon a counter-offensive—an offensive return. She was engaged in recovering the rights and liberties of which she had been for centuries deprived. The two generations which separate M. Montégut's time from our own, and especially the second of these generations, were a period of emancipation—of the land war, and the final recovery of the land by the



people in the succession of Land Acts and Land Purchase Acts; of the measures for the amelioration of social conditions, such as the Labourers Acts and the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and the Congested Districts Board; of the grant of autonomy in local affairs by the passing of the Irish Local Government Act; of the improvement in educational facilities and the removal of long-standing and serious Roman Catholic educational grievances in the establishment of the National University of Ireland.

All this material advance was accompanied by a profound, an unexampled, stirring of national consciousness which found a manifold expression. The national spirit, which had been for centuries refused expression, flowered, with its partial emancipation in the material sphere, into a florid spiritual life. The second generation between the date of M. Montégut's article and the present time was the generation of the reincarnation of intense antique ideals, and the birth of equally intense modern ideals : of Standish O'Grady and the *History of Ireland; Heroic Period*, the recapture of the inspiration of Ireland's heroic age, the epic emotion of the past; of the modern Irish literary revival of which, for all the diversity of form and method between himself and his offspring, Standish O'Grady was the authentic father; of the Fays, and the dramatic movement, the Irish National Theatre, the folk-drama of Synge and Colum and their followers; of Dr. Douglas Hyde and the Gaelic League and the Language movement; of "Æ" and Sir Horace

Plunkett and the co-operative movement which sought to recreate the old communal civilization; of the Irish industrial revival.

These things filled the intellectual life of Ireland full to overflowing. It was as if the national soul, released from its long purgatory, could not find expression swift and varied enough for its aspirations. In this phase of Ireland, even more than in that earlier phase of which M. Montégut wrote, it was more than ever true, though now for very different reasons, that Ireland was in Europe, but not of Europe. In this intense emotion of national expression in some of its manifestations, indeed, Ireland actively resented any intrusion of internationalism. The Gaelic League, for example, tended increasingly to become an exclusive movement—a movement which, jealously safeguarding that nationality which it was created to foster, suspicious of renewed assaults upon it, in a passion of nationalism shut out rigorously any external influence which might weaken the impact of its creed upon the awakening mind of the Irish people.

It was a phase which would eventually pass; but it is important to observe that the phase of Irish development which immediately preceded the outbreak of the European War was this phase in which Ireland, glorying in the expression of her new-found intellectual liberty, exalting that imaginative expression of liberty to the standard of an almost fanatical creed, was more impervious, if not deliberately hostile, to the play upon her life of wider European influences than she had ever been, perhaps, in her whole history before.

Political events conspired to confirm and perpetuate this mood up to the very moment of the outbreak of the European War. This new Ireland, intense with national consciousness, devoted all these last few years, when you were dimly realising that the march of European events tended almost certainly towards war, subconsciously preparing yourself for the shock of war—Ireland devoted these years with a single mind to the realisation of her crowning hope : the grant of Home Rule, the formal recognition by Great Britain of her individual nationality. The armed challenge of Unionist Ulster to the fulfilment of that aspiration, the formation of the National Volunteers upon the other side, all that interest intensely personal to herself was the immediate prelude to Ireland's entry into the European War. Rarely in her whole history was Ireland more preoccupied with her own affairs, more remote from Europe, than at the moment when the war made its unexpected intrusion upon her insularity.

## IX.

VAGUELY upon the outbreak of the European War you realised something of all this. You realised, at least, that the average Irishman was not to be expected to look at the war in the same way as the average Englishman. England's danger is said to be Ireland's opportunity, and your first instinctive thought was : "What will they do, this Irish people whom we have wronged for nearly seven centuries, and whose memories are longer than the fifty years or so during which we have tried to right those wrongs?" What they did at the outset, however tragic the relapse later, was in view of their history, not unremarkable. They laid aside the bitter domestic quarrel in which they were engaged, and turned to the adventure of war. I use the word "adventure" advisedly, for it was the sense of adventure, rather than any deeply-rooted conviction, as we shall see in a moment, which in an emotional phase temporarily captured the imagination of the Irish people in support of the war. They proceeded to equip three complete Irish Divisions of the New Armies. They put into the field during the first two years of war one hundred and thirty thousand men.

You were vastly surprised at the time—that time when Ireland was to you "the one bright spot"—that Ireland should make this hearty contribution to the War, instead of at once finding her opportunity in England's danger. A variety of causes

was responsible for it. I have said that Ireland is remote from Europe; but that statement is subject to qualifications and must not be pressed too far. Within recent years the barriers of isolation have been gradually breaking down, and such a profound convulsion as a general European War could not fail to stir even Ireland in her extra-European sleep—or nightmare. I have said that there has been no principle in Irish foreign policy so far as such a policy has had historical existence; but that statement also is subject to qualifications, and must not be pressed too far. In Ireland's jumble of disjointed European associations, the most consistent feature is association with France. The appeal of the French tradition—the hospitality which the “wild geese” found in France, of Sarsfield and St. Ruth, of the Irish Brigade which fought under the French flag in many a Continental field, of '98 and Humbert—was potent, despite the anti-clerical policy of the Third Republic, to align the sentiment of Ireland on the side of the Allies. The influence of that factor of the French tradition—perhaps the most powerful factor in determining at the outset on which side Ireland should stand in this quarrel—was never formally invoked and systematically exploited. If it had been, the subsequent history of Ireland's association with the war might have been very different; but the suggestion was never adopted, though it was made, to summon the shade of Sarsfield as a recruiting agent in Nationalist Ireland.

Again, the Irish are traditionally a military people, and the times in Ireland, upon the outbreak



of war, were war-like. That loaded atmosphere of gunpowder, in which Irishmen had lived for a year and more before the war, found its natural discharge in one direction in the call of arms in Europe; as later it found an outlet in another direction in the Rebellion of Easter Week, 1916. Further, the German invasion of Belgium, that monstrous outrage upon a small nationality which roused even slow-moving England to anger, was bound to evoke a response from the country whose whole history is that of an assertion of the rights of small nationalities. An essentially extra-European people like the Irish people, however, would have intervened in that cause in no mood of altruism unless it had seemed to them that, in striking a blow for the rights of small nationalities in Belgium, they were also striking a blow for the rights of small nationalities in Ireland.

It was, finally, the placing of the Home Rule Bill upon the Statute Book which made the difference in the attitude of Ireland towards the War. I repeat that I am concerned here with the racial, not the political, relations between Ireland and England. The merits or demerits of the Home Rule Act are not in question. Personally I regard it as no valid instrument of an Anglo-Irish settlement. But for Nationalist Ireland it was at least a formal recognition of Irish nationality, and that recognition, it must be admitted, was of capital value in securing Ireland's support for the war. Without it, indeed, there would have been to Nationalists some aspect of cynicism in the spectacle of England

inviting the assistance of Ireland in a war on behalf of the rights of small nationalities.

For all these reasons, then, Ireland furnished forth her quota of one hundred and thirty thousand men for the war. But it remained true, despite this participation of hers in the war, that Ireland remained essentially extra-European. The conception of the war as the supreme grapple in the secular struggle between the forces of liberalism and reaction in Europe struck no root in Ireland, for Ireland historically had no knowledge of or interest in that secular struggle. Still less did the conception that her own national existence was at stake in the war strike root in Ireland. If she had never formed any secure friendships on the Continent, neither had she ever contemplated any enemy except England. It is one of the penalties of attempting for centuries to reduce a nation to a state of vassalage that it becomes in the end incapable of envisaging as an enemy any other nation than yourself.

If it is permissible to learn from one's foes, let me quote in this connection a passage from Roger Casement's famous article of some years back—"Ireland, Germany and the Next War." Discussing the situation in Ireland in the event of a German invasion, he wrote these words: "The population has been disarmed for a century, and by bitter experience has been driven to regard the use of arms as a criminal offence. Patriotism has been treated as a felony. Volunteers and Territorials are not for Ireland. To expect that a disarmed and demoralised people, who have been sedulously batoned into a state of moral and physical dejection,

should develop military virtues in the face of a disciplined army is to attribute to Irishmen the very qualities their critics unite in denying them. 'The Irishman fights well everywhere except in Ireland' has passed into commonplace; and since every effort of government has been directed to ensuring the abiding application of the sarcasm, Englishmen would find in the end the emasculating success of their rule completely justified in the physical submission of Ireland to the new force that held her down." Strip those words of the exaggeration, born of an intense hatred of England, which led their author to be even more unfair to Ireland than to England in the effort to support his case against the latter, and they contain a substantial element of truth, which is one factor in determining the difference of Ireland's outlook upon the war.

The Irish people, moreover, though they live in an island, and an island of such a shape that no part of it is more than fifty miles from the sea, are not a naval people. An interesting study waits to be written upon the curious fact that, adventurous as their disposition is, urged to emigration as they have been for centuries, first by political and then by economic reasons, this island people have never acquired a seafaring habit. Though the East Coast has always contributed largely, and has contributed largely in this war, to the manning of the Royal Navy, the Irish people as a whole completely lack that "sense" of the sea which is instinct in the English people, and to the great majority of them the significance of sea power, profoundly though

that influence has affected their history, is a closed book. A partial explanation of this singular fact is doubtless to be found in those commercial restrictions which, as we have seen, destroyed Ireland's commerce in the eighteenth century; but that is obviously not the whole explanation. For the purposes of the present study, however, the fact, whatever its explanation, must suffice that the Irish people in the mass have no "sense" of the sea, and no conception of the significance of sea power.

For this reason, then, in addition to the reasons noted above, there was no fear of invasion to stimulate a feeling that Ireland's national existence was at stake in the war. The conception of the War as "Ireland's war," as the phrase went, never struck root in Ireland; and that indeed is the fundamental of this whole matter. One is free to deplore it and to condemn it; but the fact remains—and it may be regarded as, if a regrettable, still a natural, consequence of her history—that Ireland never grasped that conception of the War as "Ireland's war"; that she never, at bottom, regarded it as a war which must vitally concern her own destiny; that she continued, not so much because she was exigent to push her claims at inconvenient moments, as because her history had made her introspective and impervious to external influences, to conceive her own affairs as being, for her, essentially more important than the issue of the war itself; that she was inclined to regard her participation in the war, not as a sacrifice which her vital national interests demanded, but as a gratuitous assistance in somebody else's war.

In this attitude she accepted the guardianship of the British Navy as a matter of course, with no feeling that it imposed any obligation on herself, with no subconsciousness that without that "sure shield" she might be forced by invasion to recognize her direct interest in the war. No enemy cruisers bombarded her shores to remind her that such a threat existed. No Zeppelins dropped bombs on her towns and countryside to carry to her people the conviction that this was a war not merely of armies but of peoples, and of the Irish people as much as any other people. If we except the torpedoing of ships off her coasts, no outside stimulus of the war came to disturb her insular remoteness, "an island beyond an island," upon the verge of Europe and its war.



## X.

THAT remoteness of Ireland, that inevitable difference in her outlook upon the war, you had accepted in the early stages of the war as a matter of course. It seemed to you—though later emotions may have obscured the recollection—quite natural that Ireland should be exempted from certain burdens of the war. You acquiesced, indifferently if not readily, in her exemption from the Military Service Acts. But insensibly your attitude changed. Whereas in the early stages of the war it had seemed to you a very wonderful thing that Ireland should have furnished a hundred and thirty thousand men, as the war went on it became to you first a surprising, and later an exasperating, thing that she had failed to contribute the other hundred and sixty thousand men who remained available for military service. It was the surer instinct which fastened upon it as a notable fact that nearly half Ireland's available men had gone to the war, than upon it as a notable fact that a little more than half her available men had not gone. The change was subjective, in yourselves, not objective, not affecting Ireland.

In any prolonged war there occurs inevitably at a certain point a tendency towards a reaction of the national will and determination. Such a tendency occurred at a certain point in your case, in the case of the English people. But the march, the impetus,

of events corrected it almost as soon as it manifested itself. You have waged the war under a perpetual and increasing moral stimulus, a conscious and sub-conscious concentration of effort affecting both sexes and all classes. The insistence of the war's demands upon you increased and multiplied. There was the sense of movement, of destiny, urging you, the central people in the Grand Alliance, a people in the full tide and central tumult of the war, whether you would or no, along the path of greater and still greater effort. The very impetus of the thing made you willing and even eager to put forth that effort. Sometimes leading, more often following, the march of destiny and the urgent driving force of your public opinion, your rulers were moved to make a serious and concerted effort to organize you for war conditions. In this surrender to the claims of the war, this mobilization of your whole people, the women of your nation played a most important, perhaps *the* most important, part. It is the women who suffer most in war. It is the women who, as the most ardent anti-feminist must nowadays admit, in war-time largely mould, make or mar public opinion.

Now in this perpetual and increasing stimulus under which you waged the war, and especially in the invocation of the highest patriotic instincts in the women of the nation, Ireland, again, did not share. No serious and co-ordinated effort was made to organize Ireland generally for war conditions; and that default continued, with ever-increasing influence, in a country which, for many reasons—

social, political and economic—demanded strenuous, sustained and sympathetic readjustment to violently changed and changing conditions. Some schemes of war organization, indeed, touching non-essential things, but not for that reason without potent qualities of irritation and discontent, were applied with slavish impartiality to Great Britain and to Ireland. Englishmen threatened the existence of the Government because the administration of their soldiers and sailors' pensions were bungled by the responsible authorities. The principal authority, the Statutory Pensions Committee, devised a complicated and peculiarly English scheme, totally unsuited to Irish conditions, which it insisted should apply equally in Mayo and Tipperary. Half the Irish County Councils declined to try the impossible, and disabled Irish soldiers were deprived of their pensions. What the authorities did clumsily in Ireland, however, was less important than what they neglected entirely.

From all the essential schemes of war organization Ireland was simply left out altogether. She was asked for men and money; but she begged in vain, in the time of her first enthusiasm for the war, for the opportunity to render the forms of service which Englishmen and Scotsmen were told to regard as of no less vital importance. Months after England and Scotland were humming with munition and other war factories, Ireland was reluctantly thrown a consoling crumb in the shape of one miniature shell factory. When for many months past thousands of women had been busy day and night in

the State factories in Great Britain, and when machines stood idle because more women could not be found to work them, Ireland had not even been organized to give similar opportunities of "doing their bit" to more than a few hundred women. Thousands of capable women stood idle and discontented seeking employment in Ireland, and tens of thousands of others were ready to serve if an appeal was made to them; but their assistance was not invoked. We were told that every fresh acre made to produce food represented a vital war service. While the women of Great Britain were trained and organized by the State to undertake agricultural work, no similar effort was made in Ireland—a predominantly agricultural country, capable of a vastly increased production. And the head of our Department of Agriculture was surprised and disappointed that there was no increase in Irish food production!

Herein, I think, largely reside the root and explanation of Ireland's national "falling-away." A large school of Irish Nationalists believe that they can justify Ireland's retrogression by denouncing the blunders of the War Office in recruiting matters. These blunders are admitted; but the real truth lay much deeper and wider. It lay in the fact that no serious and co-ordinated steps were taken to confirm, sustain and support the enthusiasm of Ireland for the war against the inevitable tendency towards reaction. That enthusiasm, as we have seen, was, as the result of Ireland's essential remoteness from



Europe, largely superficial, largely emotional. That reaction was inevitable in any case—even more certain in Ireland than in Great Britain; but if measures had been taken to guard against it, as, under the pressure of circumstances, they were taken in Great Britain, there would have been good hope that it would have been found possible to hand on the flaming torch of enthusiasm for the war which had already lit the lamps of an unexpectedly large number of Irishmen, to every man, woman and child in the land, and to make Ireland one, for the first time in her history, with the eternal fires which ever smouldered, and had now leapt into flame, in the life of the Continent of Europe.

It was not done; the torch paled, flickered, finally went out. The reaction came in Ireland, as it came in Great Britain. It found Great Britain braced to resist its corrosive influence upon the national will by the gathering impetus of the effort which had been wisely sustained and put forth. It found Ireland—never, by the natural product of her history of isolation from Europe, whole-heartedly engaged in the war—with the “first fine careless rapture” of her superficial and emotional war interest wholly spent; it found her without the stimulus of any comprehensive plan of war organisation which should propose—by making every man and woman consciously doing something to win the war, to mitigate its suffering, or to prepare for bearing our after-war responsibilities—to carry her successfully, as Great Britain was carried successfully, over the phase of reaction. In short, the “falling away” of



Ireland is explained by the simplest rule of national psychology. It was the case of a nation whose national consciousness, as we have seen, was not deeply stirred by the war, succumbing, in that fit of reaction in which all nations shared, but over which potent influences were operative to carry the other nations, to sheer war-weariness.

It was while this mood was growing upon Ireland that there was evoked that influence which, for convenience sake, we may call *Sinn Fein*. The Irish are an emotional people; their opinion—it is another product of their history—is easily moved; reactions swing far in Ireland. It did not need much, when the national temper had swung from one of superficial enthusiasm for the war to one of war-weariness, to induce an atmosphere wherein it would swing further. Ireland had made something of an excursion, on the wings of the war, into the wider life of Europe; she had returned wearily from that excursion into her own life; there was induced a mood wherein a subtle influence must be exercised by the ideas concentrated and expressed in the words *Sinn Fein*—"We ourselves." It is a case where it is clearly difficult to disentangle cause and effect; but it may be submitted, as the more probable of two theories, that the war-weariness of Ireland was a condition precedent to active disaffection, rather than that the knowledge that disaffection was working underground produced the reaction, though it may well have contributed to the decline of interest in the war.

In any case, Ireland's enthusiasm for the war

declined ; and it declined precisely at the time when your enthusiasm was becoming more and more stable and more and more exalted. You forgot, in this new mood, those necessary differences in the Irish outlook upon the war which at an earlier stage you had accepted as a matter of course ; you ignored what Ireland had done and fastened upon what she had not done, because your new criterion for yourselves was not "What has been done?" but "What more can be done?" You asked with growing impatience why Ireland should not bear an equal share in the burden of the war. And upon this frame of mind of yours broke, suddenly, shatteringly, the Rebellion of Easter Week.

## XI.

Is it at all possible to explain that event to a people, as you are, immersed in the business of war, more than ever aloof from the mood of Ireland? I doubt it; but one must try. A friend and myself have published a substantial book in which we deal at length with the history of the Rebellion in so far, chiefly, as its mechanics are concerned. But upon mature consideration its mechanics are, I think, of relatively small importance—at least from the point of view of the present study—in comparison with its *motif*. One passage in our “History”—a footnote—perhaps goes nearest to the fundamentals of the rising. Here it is:—“We are reminded of Sorel’s idea of the catastrophic revolution: that ‘attitude of spirit which was born in ancient Greece—(we have seen earlier in this study, it may be recalled here, that the early Irish culture probably derived from Greece)—among poor and warlike tribes whose immense aristocratic pride was fostered by poets who sang of triumphant expeditions and victorious battles soon to come.’ . . . Compare one of the leaders of 1916 on ‘battle for Ireland’:—‘It is not merely the love of country felt by the fatter nations. . . It is not merely the love of the sod of Ireland. . . It is not merely the love of liberty, or of the rights of men. . . It springs not merely from economic grievance, or from grievance against the administration of alien law. . . It is the knowledge that there still lives in

this country, in this race, a "holy cause." ' Irish Nationalism here takes on the character of one of those myths or mental constructions which (in Sorel's words) 'we must not analyse too closely'; the passage to it must not be conceived as otherwise than violent and catastrophic, must never be resolved into a sum of historical details."

In other words, there was in the Rebellion some quality of inevitability. Recruiting blunders; the formation of the first Coalition Government, with, upon the one side, its possible danger to the Home Rule cause, and, upon the other side, its threat that conscription might be extended to Ireland; the pressure of German and Irish-American influence upon extremist opinion in Ireland—these events which are commonly regarded as the proximate causes of the Rebellion concern merely the superficies of things. Irritants and stimulants of this kind would bring matters to a head; they would precipitate a manifestation, but only where predisposition existed; they do not supply, in themselves, adequate causation. You must go much deeper below the surface for a valid explanation.

I have touched in an earlier chapter upon that profound stirring, awakening, flowering of national consciousness, expressed in such forms as the literary and Gaelic movements, which accompanied the partial political and economic emancipation of Ireland during the past generation. It is a facile view which would attribute to these movements any direct responsibility for the Rebellion. But there may clearly be traced to them, or rather to the mood

from which they sprang, an indirect and perfectly innocent responsibility for it. Here was an intense consciousness and expression of nationality repressed for centuries and glorying in its new-found liberty. It tended naturally into a certain fashion of militancy; we have seen that Ireland in this mood resented the intrusion of internationalism upon that new liberty of national thought which she had developed and was jealous to safeguard. In this mood there was released a high potential of national energy. Give it an opportunity, and, with the influence of that past history of Ireland which is an attitude of protest and resistance to govern and guide it, it was likely that it should discharge in violence. Such an opportunity was discovered in the disturbance of the war and the consequent movement of Irish thought into novel channels, and, following upon that disturbance, a movement back into old channels, inducing the vacuum of national thought created by Ireland's relapse into war-weariness. I submit that the most true conception of the Rebellion is that of the discharge into that vacuum of an almost inevitable effervescence upon the surface of Ireland's intense mood of national awakening.

It is not to be represented, of course, that the Rebellion was the outcome of a wholly unconscious, or subconscious, effervescence of this character. In its ultimate origins it was; but there was also present in it a certain element of deliberation. Here one approaches an aspect of Irish affairs which a writer of English birth must approach with some diffidence, and must almost despair altogether of attempting to



interpret to English readers—the aspect, I mean, of mysticism. None but a born Irishman can feel in his soul that conviction that Ireland is, indeed, *Inis Fail*, the Island of Destiny, that her destiny is high, and that she must follow where it leads, which is instinct in the Irish people, and is, perhaps, the chief stumbling-block to their understanding by the English people; though it was a man of English birth, Lionel Johnson, that odd figure of the Irish literary revival, who wrote many years ago the prophetic verse which supplies us with a key to the Rebellion, and to that brooding and introspective imagination of Pearse, its leader, which was haunted by the idea that the Irish cause demanded a blood-sacrifice :—

“A dream! A dream! an ancient dream!  
Yet ere peace come to Inisfail,  
Some weapons in some field must gleam,  
Some burning glory fire the Gael.”

It was no mere chance that the leaders of the Rebellion were, for the most part, mystical poets. The quality of mysticism invests the whole of this melancholy transaction. It will, perhaps, be better to invoke the aid of an Irishman and poet of to-day in my attempt at explanation. “The truth is,” wrote Mr. James Stephens on the morrow of the Rebellion, “that Ireland is not cowed. She is excited a little. She is gay a little. She was not with the revolution, but in a few months she will be, and her heart which was withering will be warmed

by the knowledge that men have thought her worth dying for. . . . If freedom is to come to Ireland—as I believe it is—then the Easter Insurrection was the only thing that could have happened. I speak as an Irishman, and am momentarily leaving out of account every other consideration. If, after all her striving, freedom had come to her as a gift, as a peaceful present such as is sometimes given away with a pound of tea, Ireland would have accepted the gift with shamefacedness, and have felt that her centuries of revolt had ended in something very like ridicule. The blood of brave men had to sanctify such a consummation if the national imagination was to be stirred to the dreadful business which is the organizing of freedom. . . . Following on such tameness, failure might have been predicted, or at least feared, and war (let us call it war for the sake of our pride) was due to Ireland before she could enter gallantly into her inheritance. We might have crept into liberty like some domesticated man, whereas now we may be allowed to march into freedom with the honours of war.”

Does that quotation, and the few paragraphs with which I have prefaced it, serve at all to explain the Rebellion to you? I am very conscious of the inadequacy of that explanation; it is the best I have to offer. The whole *motif* of the Rebellion was peculiarly Irish, so peculiarly Irish as almost to be unreal and unintelligible to the average English mind unacquainted with Ireland. But it was easily intelligible and very real to the Irish mind. If it is difficult for English people to understand the

Rebellion itself, it is easier for you to understand its aftermath. It occurred at a singularly unfortunate moment from the point of view of Anglo-Irish relations. England was wholly concentrated on the war, forgetful of the inevitable difference in the Irish attitude and outlook, increasingly exasperated by the "falling away" of Ireland; and the Rebellion had the effect of quickening that emotion to an intense indignation against Ireland. But for Ireland the natural and logical consequence of the Rebellion was, unhappily, to emphasise her remoteness from the war, to divert her whole interest from the affairs of Europe to her own affairs.

"Ireland," said Mr. James Stephens in the passage which I have quoted above, "was not with the Rebellion; but in a few months she will be." His phrase, "with the Rebellion," is not, of course, to be translated literally. It did not mean that Ireland would share the desire of its authors to throw off the British connexion by violence. Strategically, as I think, the Rebellion was serious; politically it was, in itself, trivial. It failed so completely and so early for the precise reason that the great mass of the Irish people did not approve of it, and not only did that mass of opinion not respond to its appeal, but immediately after its suppression it repudiated and condemned the whole business. Ireland was certainly not "with the Rebellion" in any narrow and exact meaning of the phrase. But nevertheless she was bound to be "with the Rebellion" in the sense that its inspiration was the inspiration of her whole

history; in the sense that she admired the courage of the enterprise, even if she did not approve it; in the sense that it evoked the glamour of ancient emotions. "Ireland was not with the Rebellion; but in a few months she will be." These words were written before the immediate sequel to the Rebellion. It was, in fact, a matter not of a few months, but of a few, and a very few, days. The events of those few days immediately after the suppression of the Rebellion made Ireland "with the Rebellion" with a swiftness, and to a degree, which, before they took place, no man in Ireland would have contemplated.

I am not asking you to regard the executions of the rebel leaders, the sentences of penal servitude, the deportations, announced baldly day after day without publication of the evidence which justified the infliction of the capital penalty, from behind the closed doors of Field Courts-Martial, from the point of view of their justice, or even of their expediency. I am simply inviting you to observe, and to endeavour to understand, their effect on that Irish public which read of them, as has been well said, "with something of the feeling of helpless rage with which one would watch a stream of blood dripping from under a closed door."

It follows necessarily from her history that the national heroes of Ireland, after the legendary figures of bardic times and those first opponents of foreign invasion such as Brian Boru, are the men who have resisted in arms the domination of England—who are, in other words, "rebels." Art MacMurrough



Kavanagh, who waged successful war against Richard II.; the long line of Geraldines from Garrett in the time of the Tudors to Lord Edward; the O'Neills and O'Donnells of Ulster, whose century of intermittent rebellion culminated in the first flight of the "wild geese" at the beginning of the seventeenth century, to be renewed half a century later; Sarsfield in the war of William and James (who ranks as a "rebel" in English history); Wolfe Tone and the Emmets a hundred years later; Mitchel, Smith O'Brien, Meagher, and the other "Young Irelanders" in 1848; James Stephens and the Fenian leaders in 1867—these are the national heroes of Ireland.

The men of 1916 take their place naturally in that illustrious succession in the popular imagination. Exact from them the supreme penalty for their offence, and you at once invoke, and invest their persons with, all the ancient memories for which that succession stands. You replace in a moment an appeal to reason with an irresistible appeal to sentiment.



## XIII.

THE aftermath of the Rebellion, in fact, conjured up all Ireland's past to the almost complete effacement of her present. In my earlier chapters I have endeavoured to present the Ireland of to-day against her historical background. The emotions released in Ireland by the aftermath of the Rebellion violently threw Ireland actually into that background. Some consideration of Ireland's attitude towards her rebels of the past may serve to explain the extraordinary revulsion of feeling which swept over the country as the result of the aftermath of '16. Ireland has never admitted the validity of the claim that, as an essential article of any treaty of political peace with England, as an earnest of her loyalty to the British connexion to-day, she should make, as it were, a formal act of self-humiliation, a formal repudiation of her history of rebellion and of her famous rebels. "She may enter the Council of Empire," wrote Kettle, "provided that she enters on her knees and leaves her history outside as a shameful burden. This is not a demand that can be conceded, or that men make on men. . . . In days rougher than ours, when a blind and tyrannous England sought to drown the national faith of Ireland in a sea of blood, there arose among our fathers men who annulled that design. We cannot undertake to cancel the names of these men from our calendar. We are no more ashamed of them than the Constitutional England of modern times

is ashamed of her Langtons and de Montforts, of her Sidneys and Hampdens."

You get the same sentiment in the lines of which the same writer said "as political poetry, this may be open to amendment; as poetic politics, it is sound, decisive and answerable":—

"Bond, from the toil of hate we may not cease;  
Free, we are free to be your friend.  
But when you make your banquet, and we come,  
Soldier with equal soldier must we sit,  
Closing a battle, not forgetting it,  
With not a name to hide.  
This mate and mother of valiant rebels dead  
Must come with all her history on her head.  
We keep the past for pride,  
Nor war nor peace shall strike our poets dumb.  
No rawest squad of all Death's volunteers,  
No simplest man who died,  
To tear your flag down, in the bitter years,  
But shall have praise, and three times thrice again,  
When, at that table, men shall drink with men."

In the cold and impartial light of history, this attitude of Ireland's towards her rebels of the past is surely justified; for those rebellions themselves were justifiable. The rebellions of earlier years were the reply of a proud people to a monstrous political aggression; the rebellions of the close of the eighteenth and of the nineteenth centuries had behind them the driving force of economic misery. No such justification was to be discovered for the Rebellion of 1916; but, "we keep the past for

pride," and that Rebellion, justified or not justified, approved by the great mass of the Irish people or not approved, evoked in a moment, when its authors were made to pay the capital penalty, an irresistible appeal to tradition, to sentiment, which, as I have said, completely replaced the appeal to reason. The ghosts of Ireland's yesterdays are never far behind, beckoning over the shoulder of to-day.

Remember that Ireland's whole history is a history of protest and resistance against the domination of England, and that she has never in all that history envisaged any enemy except England; remember, on the other hand, that, as a natural consequence, her history is one of utter remoteness from Europe, and that her national imagination was never really captured by the appeal of the European war of to-day. Remember these things, and it will become intelligible how it was that the memory of her thousands of soldiers who had died in the face of the enemy in France and Flanders, in Gallipoli and Macedonia, suddenly became less vital and real to her than the memory of her dozen rebels who died at the hands of English firing-parties in the barrack-yards of Dublin.

From that moment the war ceased to matter to Ireland. The old and deep emotions resumed full sway of the national imagination and jostled out the novel and superficial emotions induced by the war and Ireland's early participation in it. All her past history recoiled upon her. She was back in the ancient fierce mood of quarrel with England. That old preoccupation of hers which had kept her

isolated from Europe, revived by the events of Easter Week and the events which followed, once more thrust Europe and its affairs out of her immediate ken. Two years after the outbreak of the European War Ireland was again as remote from Europe in her absorption in her own affairs as she had been up to the eve of war—indeed, she was even more remote. That utter remoteness from the war was something that could be felt—felt almost as soon as one landed at Kingstown.

The attitude of the English people, as exhibited in the greater part of the English Press, towards this phenomenon of Ireland's remoteness from the war in its latest and extreme expression has been singularly unhelpful. I do not say that it has been unintelligible. The feeling against Ireland of a people immersed in the business of war, profoundly ignorant for the most part of Irish history, and too impatient to stop and reflect upon the continuing influence of that history upon the Ireland of to-day, is, on the contrary, to an unbiassed student of affairs, perfectly intelligible, and, as I have said before, though I have attempted to assume the *rôle* of such a student here, personally I deplore this remoteness of Ireland from the war. But the mass of the Irish people are not unbiassed students of affairs; and I repeat that this attitude has been singularly unhelpful. It took the form of a renewed proposal to extend conscription to Ireland; and the methods by which it was proposed to recommend this proposal to Ireland were of two kinds.

In the first place, it was suggested that, if



Ireland did not accept conscription, she would be made the victim of a boycott by England. She would be denied Home Rule; she would be penalised in her commercial relations with England. There never was a time when this kind of argument could have less effect upon Ireland, or, if it had any effect, would have that of popularising the feeling which we conveniently describe as *Sinn Féin*. The Rebellion was, in one aspect, the expression of a protest against the Irish policy which was content to regard what Ireland considered to be her rights as matters which should be left to the fortune of English party political exigencies. Long before the Rebellion the feeling was growing up that the expression of the demand for the recognition of Ireland's national rights in the form of intervention in somewhat squalid political intrigues in the British Parliament was scarcely dignified for a people advancing claims which they desired to be regarded as national. You have that feeling in Mr. W. B. Yeats's lines, written several years ago :

“ Was it for this the wild geese spread  
The grey wing upon every tide,  
For this that all that blood was shed,  
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,  
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,  
All that delirium of the brave :  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.”

The Ireland which, after the Rebellion, was, in



Mr. James Stephens's words, "excited a little, gay a little," which was under the influence of the romantic mood whose death Mr. Yeats had prematurely mourned—this Ireland was not likely to respond to the argument of political expediency advanced in the English Press.

The other argument advanced was no better calculated to evoke a favourable response from an Ireland in this mood. It was absurd to suggest that a race with a great military tradition like the Irish had suddenly become, in general, a race of cowards; it was even more fantastic to accuse of cowardice because he would not submit to conscription that Irishman in particular who was fully prepared to go out on a hillside with a gun to resist it. The Irish opposition to conscription had been strengthened by the fact that the Rebellion was partly inspired by the belief that its application was imminent, so that the memory of the dead remained a continuing inspiration to resist it.

Apart from that sentiment, the Irish opposition to conscription is inspired by one main and several contributory reasons. It derives in part from the natural repugnance of Irishmen to compulsion in any form, and *a fortiori* in its extremest form. Ireland has had plenty of compulsion in her history, and the more she has had of it the stronger has grown her attitude of protest and resistance. It derives in part—in large part—from the fact on which I have earlier laid emphasis, that the conception of the war as "Ireland's war" never

struck any deep root in Ireland. Conscription is not a measure to which a nation is prepared to submit unless it is firmly persuaded that its most vital interests are at stake, and that they can be defended by no less means; but, as I have endeavoured to show, Ireland was not, and is not, conscious that her vital interests are at stake to this degree.

In the next place, it derives in part from the view that, where no urgent necessity of this character exists, wherein all other considerations must be sacrificed, Ireland cannot economically afford the drain of manhood involved in general conscription and the high rate of wastage in man-power which is suffered in modern war. The population of Ireland has been reduced by half in the past fifty years, and Ireland to-day is sadly under-populated. The normal growth of population has scarcely yet begun to balance the loss of population through emigration. The fact that, even under conscription, relatively so small a proportion of population would be mobilisable is due to the circumstance that an unduly large proportion of the population consists of men respectively over and under military age. The percentage of rejections have always been much higher among Irish than among English recruits, for the same reason that emigration drains the country of a great number of its best men. In these circumstances it is represented that general conscription of her small stock of healthy young men would mean for Ireland something not very far removed from race-suicide. I am not endorsing this argument; I am merely stating it.

But, most of all, the Irish opposition to conscription derives from the belief that the principle of nationality is vitally involved in the question, and that acceptance of it would fatally compromise the national claims of Ireland. You offered no intervention when Australia debated the question of conscription; you were unmoved by her rejection of it by *referendum*; you regarded it as a matter for Australia to decide for herself, and of her own free will. The Irish claim is that Ireland stands in this matter in a position analogous with that of Australia. I have not seen this case better put than it was put in an anonymous letter which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* last autumn, over the signature of "An Irishman." As I have said, my political associations in this country have been Unionist. The Irish Unionist view, of course, is that conscription should have been extended to Ireland. I am not competent, therefore, to state this aspect of the case against it myself; and I cannot do better in an attempt to define the Nationalist attitude than quote that statement of the case in full.

"Ireland's opposition to the application of conscription to her by the British Legislature is not an accidental thing. It is indissolubly bound up with her claim to nationhood. Ireland is indeed *de facto* part of the United Kingdom, but that fact is the consequence of an instrument, the Act of Union, the moral validity of which Ireland has never recognized. The whole of the circumstances leading up to and attendant on the passing of that

measure—as witness the testimony of Mr. Gladstone—are sufficient justification for the Irish attitude towards it. The history of Ireland since the measure was passed has been the record of the struggle to obtain recognition and restoration of the right, never abandoned by her, to govern herself. The struggle has taken the form of a continuous affirmation of that right, and a continuous protest against the claim of the British Parliament to make laws for her. If this is true of laws affecting the disposition of the property and persons of Irishmen, how much more true must it be of a measure affecting the disposition of their lives? Indeed, the difference is one of kind rather than of degree. Assuming good intentions, a man or a people may possibly go far without moral blame in disposing of the affairs of another man or another people; but nothing could justify one man in pledging the life of another so long as the other was capable of judgment. That, at all events, seems an elementary principle of civilization, and its negation obviously implies slavery. Let me give you an example. The suggestion was made in Parliament, by Colonel Churchill, I think, that black troops might be enrolled to fight in the war. If this meant the application of the ordinary methods of recruiting, there might be something to say for it, but if it meant the forcible taking of South African natives and impressing them into regiments, that would quite clearly be slavery—of the extremest type. Colonel Churchill, I have no doubt, would promptly repudiate the second of the two interpretations.



Now, starting from the basis that Ireland has never assented to her *de facto* incorporation in the United Kingdom, the position is the same. It would give no moral sanction to the forcible impressment of South African natives if bogus legislation here and in South Africa were passed as a preliminary making them members of the United Kingdom; nor can the Irish Act of Union give the necessary moral sanction to conscript Irishmen."

"This is a matter upon which no concession is possible. If we Irishmen were to admit that any body, save a properly constituted Irish Legislature, has the right to dispose of the lives of Irishmen, we should be giving up everything, for everything goes with that admission. We should be abandoning the last shred of nationality and national feeling. No matter how much we may approve of the war and believe in the justice of the Allied cause, no matter how much individually we may be willing—and even eager—to fight for that cause, there is a higher principle involved in the refusal or acceptance of the British Parliament's right to apply conscription to Ireland. To fight for the Allies is to fight for the menaced or actually outraged freedom of other nations. It is a good thing. But to admit the claims of any other people to force conscription on Ireland is to give the lie to our whole claim to nationhood, to deny our own right to freedom, to sell ourselves into slavery. Resistance to that claim comes first."

A more personal illustration may serve to elucidate this attitude. I have met young



Nationalists who had made up their minds to enlist, but reversed their decision when the introduction of conscription seemed likely. Their action may appear in the highest degree irrational; it is, on the contrary, from their point of view, severely logical. They express this point of view something after this fashion:—"This is a war for the defence of small nationalities. Very well. We are prepared to take part in it. But if it is proposed to conscript Irishmen, that is a denial of the rights of small nationalities. It destroys the whole moral basis of the war's appeal to us. There is, morally, no essential difference between Germany conscripting Poles and England conscripting Irishmen. On such terms no moral issue remains at stake in the war; it is a mere scuffle of the appetites of powerful nations. In these circumstances we might with equal justice engage on the side of Germany as on the side of England." We return to the fundamental of the whole matter. Ireland is incapable, as the consequence of her history, of envisaging European affairs except in terms of her own affairs.

## XIV.

WE have reached, then, something like the culminating point in what Kettle, in his last political will and testament, written in the trenches of Picardy, called "the tragedy of two fools." A malignant destiny has so far frustrated the hope of those who saw in the war the supreme opportunity of an Anglo-Irish reconciliation. Ireland and England, in the third year of the war, are perhaps further apart than they have been in this generation.

Let me attempt to summarise the conclusions which, as it seems to me, must emerge from our consideration of Anglo-Irish relations and the war. You have on the one side an Ireland with a history of remoteness from Europe which begins in the dark ages, and, in consequence of her age-long absorption in the quarrel with England, has persisted to our own time. You have on the other side an England which, though she is herself largely responsible for that remoteness of Ireland from Europe, has so consistently failed to attempt to read the lessons of Irish history that she ignores this capital feature of it—the remoteness of Ireland from Europe—in her consideration of Ireland's attitude towards the war. That attitude of aloofness which has moved the English people to so profound and natural a resentment derives from the essential remoteness of Ireland from Europe; from her incapacity to envisage any other nation except England as a real enemy; from her failure to grasp

the conception of this war as being in any true sense "Ireland's war"; in a word, from her inevitably introspective habit of mind. In the early stages of the war it seemed that events were ridding her of this introspective habit of mind and breaking down the barriers of her insularity and her isolation from Europe. But that promise was belied. The fact that her participation in the war was superficial rather than intense, the product of emotion rather than of conviction, and the absence of any sufficient moral stimulus, made her succumb early to the inevitable reaction from which all the belligerent nations suffered. In that mood of reaction came the Rebellion and its aftermath; and Ireland was once more driven in upon herself, once more confirmed in her tradition of remoteness from Europe.

If England has made inadequate allowance in her outlook on Ireland during the war for that tradition of Ireland's remoteness from Europe, Ireland in her outlook upon England during the war has made inadequate allowance for England's absorption in the business of the war, and her necessary subordination of all other considerations to the prime necessities of the war. Ireland has a heavy, perhaps the heavier, share in the responsibility for the present estrangement. But these thoughts on Anglo-Irish relations and the war are addressed primarily to English readers, and I would conclude by submitting two considerations to them. As I said at the outset, I have no mechanical device to offer for a solution of Anglo-Irish difficulties. That

solution, when it comes, will proceed from a better understanding between the two peoples; it will be no true solution unless it is firmly rooted in such a better understanding; and if what is written here may contribute in any degree to that better understanding, it will have served its purpose.

The first consideration which I would submit is this. While in one direction the events of the war have driven Ireland and England further apart, in another direction they have brought them nearer together. When Ireland is in a calmer mood, when the intense, and, perhaps, largely instinctive and irrational resentment against England born of the Rebellion has died down, she will, I hope, look on England with new eyes. One of the most ardent, but one of the most reasonable, of the younger Nationalists lately wrote these words :—" England's gigantic complacency and self-sufficiency may no longer exist to the same extent as an enemy of our cause. She has been tried in the fire of Europe, and has proved worthy of respect." The sentiment is not expressed, certainly, in the most felicitous language; but it is true, I think, that the Irish people—a generous people—will again discover a profound admiration for the great qualities which England has revealed in the war, and that this new sentiment will help towards a reconciliation.

The other consideration which I would submit is this. If both peoples preserve an attitude of disdain, we shall get no further towards that reconciliation. If Ireland's judgment of England is harsh and sometimes unjust, that is no adequate reason why

England should refuse to recognize the inevitable difference in Ireland's outlook on the war, and judge her accordingly. If that inevitable difference is recognized, you will not seek to judge her by your own standards, by normal European standards; for Ireland is the changeling in modern Europe, and—according to your standards of the things that matter—she is still fairy-led.

“ All the way to 'Tir na n' Og are many roads that  
run,  
But the darkest road is trodden by the King of  
Ireland's son.  
The world wears down to sundown, and love is lost  
and won,  
But he recks not of loss and gain, the King of  
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He follows on for ever, when all your chase is  
done,  
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